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THE LATEST FAD.



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE LATEST FAD.

BY ANEMONE.

Addah K. Montgomery



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"Ye gods, the latest fad is out,
A queer one in good sooth,
It is the rage, they noise about,
To speak and tell the truth."

Tatler, Louisville Times.

of
LOUISVILLE, KY.
CHARLES T. DEARING.

1895.

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THE LATEST FAD.

INTRODUCTION.

The snow has melted, the ice has broken on the river, and the sun shines warm and bright. I love the warmth and seek the light with joy —seek it early with fondest hope, for I have slumbered in a gentle breast and dreamed sweet dreams of golden and crimson rays.

Have I been timid? No, I have been cautious; from sacred involucrum that has shielded my heart I have slowly pushed once, twice, thrice a delicate, quinate leaf, and the fresh wind, that gave me name, has fanned my petaloid calyx to a dreamy unfolding that I may look up to the gloriously bright sky, and I am called Anemone.

This is a beautiful world and a jolly go-lucky old town that has tried to cast off its provincial ways, even as I have burst through the crust and aspire to higher things. The smoke that curls above is gray, but it is fantastic; there is a glow of sunlight on many spires, and glinting rays and shadows below that whirl and waltz together; there is a soft splash from the river and a twittering of birds that is heard like an

undertone amid musical bells and reverberating whistles. Are there warmer skies, or brighter lights? I question. “Yes! yes!” the wind whispers, but expanding my corolla until the silky vestment can bear no greater strain, I answer back for him to bear far away,—“It can not be, for this is Louisville, and Louisville is my home!”

There is a great burst of sounds, a whirring of wheels, a buzzing of saws and the trampling of many feet, but each has a voice of its own to me; there is something new of which all would speak—just a fad for a time-honored mother. The breaking ice thundered it forth, and when it melted away the murmuring waves caught up the refrain; it resounds in the bells, is echoed in the footsteps, falls with each trip-hammer, and winds with circular saws; half-fledged sparrows twitter it from the eaves, it is whispered by rustling silk on counters spread, and comes from club-houses in tinkling tones of silver and glass; the frogs by the river are hoarsely croaking it, dainty lips are appealingly calling for it, even the silvery notes of the cricket on each hearth, like a little Tuba amid greater horns, keeps constantly singing, “Tell the truth! Tell the truth! It is Louisville’s latest Fad!”

CHAPTER I.

MUSINGS.

Golden bars of light form ladders for shining step-ways upward. How pure it must be above the odor of the earth! Still this is a charming old world, its dust is heaped in so many shapely forms that lure the fancy and fetter the heart, and the denizens of this town on the river are not all climbing higher.

There is a heaven over all, I have heard it said, and just below it an atmospheric realm where all with wings may soar, and I have been told, too, that all mortals may have pinions and fly away to joys celestial if they but obey One whose light is the life of all, yet they are content here. I cannot mount higher, but I crave that light; it brought me from darkness to-day. I know there is another realm below me, for it was once my home, and darkness reigns there evermore, yet it is fraught with life and hope and beauty, and those who were my friends there are all seeking the light. I knew and loved them, nurtured in the same bosom. I knew their hopes and aspirations, their sorrows and weaknesses, even as they

knew mine, and in the proper season I know they will all come to the light. Oh! why do not men mount higher too?

We of that dark sphere have an unspoken language with a meaning all our own, and a moral law, too, so that we bespeak ourselves just what we are. There is one who above the crust, after many others have bloomed and faded, lifts his head proudly, and though he hath not lips to move, he hath a mein that proclaims solemnly,

“Truth needs no flowers of speech.”

Were he human he would be a nobleman among men, as he is a peer in the Flower Land, in whose soft hush words are not language. Mortals call him White Chrysanthemum.

People are like flowers, and there are all sorts from the hot-house to the field; sometimes when they smile I see them look like petals softly touched by the wind, and I see, too, frowns that dwarf and shrivel, and sorrows that have crippled form and fancy like a flower crushed by a heedless foot, or withered by drouth, or the worm at the core, and I am sad oft-times because it is the fairest that is blighted. Nor do mortals need words to bespeak them what they are; they are but walking

stalks hooded, capped, or petaled, each with an emblem (it is a thought not new, perhaps, but true) actions and faces speak without the Corn-cockle's language to tell where there is "more beauty than worth."

I have seen one in this city who steps lightly in his mundane walk; I have noted all his folly, and observed all that lifts him above his inconsistency. He has easy grace, and many charming costumes, and when I see him raise his head haughtily, only to bow graciously, I watch the flickering light on his smooth cheeks and the fringe-like hair parted in the middle with dainty yet careless touch, and I know that he is a human Carnation, that he hath that "haughty spirit that goeth before a fall."

I heard his musings, and I am sure he has heard some sounds to which I have listened. He was alone in quarters such as bachelors love, in faultless smoking-jacket and cap, and the smoke that puffed above his lazy head took many a cue and turn like the thoughts in the bewildered pate it enveloped. Those thoughts would have been bright and fanciful enough, only he tried to stupefy them by his own indifference.

"Gad! I have done everything a fellow—ah (even thoughts can drawl) wants to do—ah.

I have gone every gait, I imagine. Have had coats from shortest sacks to claw-hammers, pantaloons like bags, and pantaloons as tight as Mephistopheles could bear 'em. Neckties have been Windsor, stock, or four-in-hand, whatever the goddess decreed; I have gone barehanded, have gloried in the precisest gloves, have had box toes, gondolas, and tooth-picks on my wretched feet; have studied stripes and checks in variation until my eyes twitched and my head swam; have carried a cane with a head heavier than my own, and once a watch guard that would answer for a log chain. I've been crammed into corners, have sat behind theatre hats, have quietly watched pug puppies get kisses while I have got none; I've been sat upon by boarding-house keepers, and hoodood by hackmen, and have tried to bear it all with the spirit of a man; I've been to flower shows, dog shows, and even the Gallimaufry, and my courage failed not, but at last—the deuce take it! I am out of the count and clear out of the fashion, (down went the pipe, ashes and all) for I can't tell the truth!"

CHAPTER II.

IVY AVENUE.

There is many a way and many a turn in this merry town for the heavy tread as well as the light trip, trip, but none like one I will mention. Fourth they say in rotation, but when four is meant IV is often written; what is I-V but I-ivy, when pronunciation is made? Then in the term that I know Ivy Avenue let it be with a language of its own—"Nothing can part us"—for what has ever parted long my sweet girlish flowers from the pretty Ivy trail, evergreen and fresh in its own bower, and evergreen and fresh in their thoughts and memories.

I have seen many flower-like faces come and go on Ivy Avenue, Hot-house Roses, Wild Violets, even the common little Field Daisy, with the sorrowing Myrtle, but three have often come together that I love to watch. They have fluttered as the air flutters the petals on a rose, and whispered like a fairy's eolian strain played by the night wind on the stamens of a lily. They have admired with ecstasies of delight Easter cards and flowers, have sought

out with eyes as bright as periwinkles the latest modes and the catchy fads, and they are admired by all, for do they not bring a breath of this bright spring as they walk? Oh! they are so dainty and so sweet! How their godets shimmer in light and shade, rustling together like newly budded leaves! How their ribbons gleam like the tinted waves of color that deck the sunset sky! my three charming ones! And all have seen them (for their homes are right here in this dear old town) my Hyacinth, my Snowdrop, my White Moss Rose.

My Hyacinth is tall and fair, and this new spring light loves to hide in her shining hair, burnished with gold. She has wanted for nothing through all her dainty tripping on this crust the flowers break through. She had an ancestor who has been mentioned in many books. Who has not heard of that charming *Hyacinthus* whom *Zephyrus* slew? Her family is still among the first; it has known the highest culture for years and years, and she is called an heiress because she has heired all the good gifts conferred upon it. She can afford to be erect, and she will never bend without breaking; that is why she has broken so many hearts, and her own heart—ah! I have seen

what is in it, my fragrant one, but I will whisper it softly, she is not always happy: she is jealous—jealousy, alas! is the emblem of herself and of her kindred.

My little Snowdrop, is small, her face is pearly white, and her eyes so gentle have a pink shade creeping over an azure blue, blending to purple in their earnest depth, and, like a dew-drop on a bud, you can read her pure thoughts through and through, but hers is a courageous little heart. Her forefathers have braved many storms, and written their names on famous fields, and her language is as true as unspoken words can be; it is the unspoken stealing imperceptibly to the senses that is always truth, while noisy utterances, we who listen in silence know may be but boasting. Hers is no vain boasting, as with white chiseled features turned to the light she mutely tells, "I am no summer friend."

My White Moss Rose—see the grace if she droops her head! see the radiance if she lifts her face! She has lived in ease, has been loved and petted, sorrow has been but a mist that the warm sun rolled back in a cloudlet veil to unfold her beauty. She has a name of which she may be proud the world over, and a kindred of unsullied honor of whom she is ne'er

ashamed to speak. She can bend graciously, but she can haughtily sway back, and she is not afraid; her insight is clear, her response quick, her cleverness (like the silky, emerald-hued moss drooping over the stem) hides what intuitively she knows until the polished thorn of her repartee strikes her offender. True! true! my peerless! The soundless music of floral tongue to fathomless senses sends a ceaseless thrill—"Thou art one of a thousand."

One special day I saw this trio glide the evergreen trail of Ivy, and the breath of the passage was perfume; and I heard it said by others, "The lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," and I knew it was so. They bowed and smiled, and met many who bowed and smiled in return.

One they met was tall and erect, and his eyes shone like stars with a quick flash of white light in a dark purple iris. He was greeted with dimples that came and went in velvet-petaled cheeks like the sunbeams love to come and go in a garden of flowers, and when he spoke little Snowdrop drooped her head, and a hue like the first rosy light of dawn spread over her face, then it was I felt a pain I could hardly define for I knew him well;

I have met him often—the showy Sweet-William. Alas! “A man may smile and be avillain too.”

He claims kinship with Carnation, and far back, I believe, they did have a common ancestor, but Carnation is not proud of it. He has a relation, though, whom I know—the Wild-sweet-william — unwelcome in garden, field, or border; tenacious ever, but never valiant, he flees a storm and blooms in drouthy August; his habits are scanty, his means limited, so he dwells among rocks and where the soil is poorest.

Ah! my poor little Snowdrop, the grandest Sweet-william was ne'er fit for thy mate. Let him bow his presumptuous head on his coarse, fibrous stem and pass on his way. He knows by-paths that you know not, and flaunts himself in places where you would wither. He is showy, but a silver flask can hold a fiery fluid, and polished cards when trumps may insinuate as much fraud as the commonest paste-board. His gaudy jewelry is his insignia, his showy clothes the regalia of his order, for pools are pools wherever bought. It was said of old, “upon his vesture they cast lots,” and the wind of chance has scattered that seed through every generation. Oh! let him go, my little darling, let him go!

True, the family of *Dianthus*, of which he is a scion, had many worthy branches, but think of the species and not of the genus. It is a law of dear old Botany that, that which hath thorns, or scales, or habits peculiarly its own must be considered a separate tribe. *Sweet-william* can never be a *Carnation*, nor a *Chinapink*, though some kind of cousin to them. He might have represented a branch as worthy as they, (Gerarde spoke well of his fathers) but we only know now that

“he smiles and is a villain.”

I heard springing foot-steps overtaking the dainty trio, and I smiled when I recognized the one who approached. It was *Carnation*; he hurried that he might speak before they entered the carriage waiting for them, but he arrived just when they were seated, and laid his hand on the shining varnish of the door to stay them, or that old *Berberry*, the coachman, (“a sour temper is no slight evil”) would have driven away. Coachmen always tire of waiting, I believe, I have been told.

Carnation was not alone, a youth with a silky down on chin and cheeks, who is seen here, there and everywhere, was with him. He is called *Dandelion*, and below the crust it is

said that he intrudes. He was in his own colors, for Carnation would have eluded him if he could.

It is happiness to stand with one foot on a carriage step with three such flowers within, and Carnation realized it, but Dandelion did not so much enjoy leaning against the door in the background, although he peeped under the fringe straight into White Moss Rose's face. She is the chosen one of his budding affections, but alas! she is the choice, too, (as all Louisville knows) of Carnation's full-blown hope.

Hyacinth looked ill at ease, and grew restless like a flower starting and trembling when some foreign insect invades its perianth and makes it quiver—Carnation, the handsomest man in town, did not bow his perfumed head in acknowledgement of her charms, but sought, ever, her fair rival.

Of what were they talking? Not of poetry, music and art, great words and hard words express all that. A silent flow like my own sweet language sparkled a moment in his eyes, and then went straight to a mossy depth, was placidly received and softly covered, while, all the time the lips of these mortal plants rattled of joyous themes and tinkled with merry laughter.

Why should they not speak of the new fad, too? The south wind that had just borne a message to the Signal Service Corps (whom, we admit, it has sometimes deceived), high on the Custom House, whispered as it lightly skipped by, "Tell the truth!" The clock on the City Hall rang out, and in the chime was plainly heard, "Tell the truth!" The bargain counters behind each window decked in spring's gayest charms groaned audibly beneath their burdens, "Tell the truth!" The massive printing press in the Courier-Journal basement, although it does not always practice what it preaches, hummed and wheezed then snorted, "Tell the truth!" The light shimmered on the cross at the top of the Cathedral spire, and like an evanescent sprite, glinted across roofs and walls, and though lent is passed, wrote in letters varied and unique on bricks and granitoid, "Tell the truth!"

So when Carnation vowed by all he held most sacred, even by that gold-rimmed eye-glass treasured in a pocket near his heart that it would take lens of greater power than any he had ever worn to discover a pleasure in Louisville, and he perforce must go away quite soon, White Moss Rose, knowing that the language of his lips and his eyes made a cross

she could not reverence, and that he would pique her into betrayal of feeling if he could, laughed, and drew the fragrance of her own thoughts closer into the secret corolla of woman's stronghold for pent-up emotion, and bade him think of Miss Poppy Variegated, one whose flirtations, she knew, were many, and whose arts, he had often declared, were powerless to move him. Cruel White Moss Rose knew, too, that it wounded his self-approbation to refer him to such a one, so she pricked again by adding,

“You could not tear yourself from her, you know, so tell the truth, if it does not shock your system, it will only put you in the fashion, it is Louisville's latest fad.”

He lifted his hat, and set it farther back on the colossal crown of what men in this town call intellect, and questioned,

“Could Louisville bear the truth? Might not the dear old city of the falls sicken and shrivel away at exigency so unexpected? How dare I say to men, your politics is a blank, your religion all a fraud; your candidates, bold and brazen, their villainy cannot hide, and your preachers, oft as not, wear an armor of the softest, whitest wool? Would it do to wake up the School-board? or, shake up Aldermen

in their seats? or, refer to municipal rights when I have power only to speak? What would become of our city officers? where would be the city archives we have prized? or, if I could be bold enough to proclaim it, that Louisville is more provincial than metropolitan, that her ideas are the same that Clarke shipped down the river, what would the rabble do with me? If I say her wasted energy has floated away in smoke, that her ambition has caught its pinions in the wires that cage her in, or that she is one big bird house for sparrows—sparrows human, and sparrows on the wing, sparrows that walk, and some that talk, content, all, with their own broods, and thinking nothing of to-morrow, could my own reputation stand? Or suppose I say she is an overgrown wart on the top of Kentucky's sleepy old head? or at best an old, old fossil in the Ohio's forsaken channel?

“This fad has come too suddenly, practice has made us perfect in another art, and ready adaptation has made fiction seem like truth; it has become second nature, and it is hard to change our spots. I realize my own condition: it has blighted my hopes and embittered my dreams. I have not the courage to again take up duty. Ah! send me to the wild West and

let me fight Indians; let me go in pursuit of the lost Grail, or in some far away seclusion let me write a biography of Melchizedek, but do not bid me live contrary to my own nature. My ambition is thwarted, my plans are all disarranged, I am not what I have striven to be, verily I am no longer a fashionable man—I cannot tell the truth!"

He drew his hat over his eyes and turned aside. Dandelion released his hold on the carriage door, and it moved slowly away.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.

There is an awful clatter, a rumbling and a shaking I ne'er have felt before. The bells are all ringing, the whistles are blowing, the children are crying and the news-boys bawling. Oh! such dreadful, dreadful things have happened.

The town has been rent in twain, and great branching chasms are widening in every street. The City Hall is turned inside out; the Court House stands on end; the Evening Post has gone down into the hole where it stood; the Sunday Truth has faded away; the Commercial uttered but one groan ere it departed; the Times office is on fire, and every editor of the Courier-Journal is on the roof trying to wait with composure for his own wings. The Custom House is rocking, and the Signal Service says a tornado is here. It cannot be helped, this unsuspecting town has brought sorrow upon its own head. The truth has been told.

Old Miss Zinnia, the prudish old soul, has offended Mrs. Hollyhock by saying she is ambitious only of show. Mrs. Narcissus has hurt Mrs. Sage's feelings by telling her, that although they were school-mates and friends, and she would not wound her for the world, she thinks it would be best for young Sage not to call too often on her daughter. Mrs. Myrtle has given a tea and invited only her particular friends; a more select circle really than any one imagined. Miss Touch-me-not called on Miss Peach-blossom, she was at home, but could receive no one that day; Mrs. Snap-dragon ventured consolation, "Would she be exactly in the fashion," she snapped, "why didn't she say, she did not want to see you?" "I would appreciate courtesy more," retorted Miss Touch-me-not; "she might have had the grace to say she was not at home."

Major Larkspur told Mrs. Sweet-pea, that charming young widow, that Col. Snow-ball has ever lived a useless life, and when Col. Snow-ball heard it, he said Larkspur is a fickle soul, who last year thought as much of the widow Tulip as he now professes to think of another. Mrs. Sweet-pea does not speak to either now, and if it ever comes to be the fad they will doubtless have a duel.

Mrs. Thistle had told all her neighbors that she never did like children, and Mrs. Nightshade does not believe her because she has a son no one could help liking.

Young Heliotrope fondly laid his heart at Miss Variegated Pink's feet, and she flatly refused him to accept that bachelor, Goldenrod. Miss Geranium, burning with envy, said, "Only an old country squire with money to encourage him."

Carnation was in sore distress, he met White Moss Rose on Ivy Avenue and she bowed coldly. He laid his hand on his heart, and said many times, "It is all over!"

Then he met Hyacinth, she knew the true state of affairs, and thinking it her auspicious hour, smiled and tried to attract him. He knew she would offer him balm for all his woes if he would only receive it, and he looked down deep in his heart and asked the question,

"Could I give up White Moss Rose and ever be happy with another?" and his heart spoke the truth in answer,

"No! no!"

Then he laid his hand on his breast to still the tumult the truth hath aroused, and allowed her to pass in a jealous rage that almost turned her yellow, while he murmured to himself,

"I will make an effort; I will summon all my strength and speak the truth, too."

He walked fast, but his heart beat faster. He went to White Moss Rose's home and called for her.

She swayed back and forth pliantly, and smiles rippled all over her face when she greeted him, but he was afraid of those little polished thorns, and the fear made him stammer, yet he told her at last,

"I love you," and he pleaded with deepest emotion; "be my own White Moss Rose—my one in a thousand."

She smiled, and that smile was a keen little brier that darted to his cheeks and made them burn. Then she spoke and he felt like a thousand prickles were encasing him.

"Of course I appreciate all you have said, and am proud of the honor you would confer, but we are not congenial, our ideas and pursuits vary. You are not a fashionable man, you have confessed it to me and to others, and I could not so offend my friends, nor my own judgment by linking my fate with one who ignores the latest fashion."

He bowed in silence, he had not the courage to urge what an effort, speaking the truth she disregarded, had cost him.

He went out, and never before did a Carnation so droop with anguish. The haughty spirit had received a fall.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAD PREVAILS.

Peace reigns once more. There have been repairs, explanations, and tears, and the rents the spring paint does not cover the Easter flowers do. This is like a city that has come out of mourning; so many tiresome chains have been snapped the very air seems redolent of freedom. The truth has been told, there is nothing more to dread.

There is one to whom happiness did not come as soon as to others. He walked the streets, and where the great rifts had been he saw that it was cemented anew, but there was a rift in his heart that nothing healed; he had spoken the truth, but he had received no response to gladden him.

Poor Carnation grew pale and thin; his appearance was commented upon by all who knew him, yet no one held forth a friendly hand to assist him until Snow-drop in kindness said to him:

“You are not happy, Carnation.”

"Alas! I can never be again," he answered mournfully.

"Yes, I think there is hope for you," she said gently. "I know why you grieve; your truth was not accepted because you had said you could not tell the truth; now it is known you were in earnest there is another regret she did not speak the truth, too. White Moss Rose does not hold her head so erect, it droops on a pliant stem, and I have seen drops like freshly distilled dew on her white petals, and I know that she mourns for something."

He lifted his bowed head and faintly smiled.

She left him, and again he hastily sought White Moss Rose. Her manner was so subdued he was no longer afraid of a sting.

"Will the truth never prevail," he asked anxiously.

"It has prevailed," she answered softly, "this is a wonderfully changed city."

He sighed and regarded her long and earnestly, and she did not shrink from him, then their heads slowly swayed together and they clasped hands while the dew-drops she had restrained 'neath the creamy, curling petals gushed forth shining like diamonds as they dropped, and he knew his truth was accepted forevermore.

CHAPTER V.

ANTICIPATIONS.

My emblem is anticipation. My friends say I have the happy faculty of brightly foreshadowing the future. It is a great pleasure now, for this old town is a garden full of sweet posies; I see them grouped all around me, and I smile oftener than I sigh.

“ As time rolls along many changes it brings
In fashions and fancies, in men and in things.”

Oh! but there’ll be changes here, and will not people stare?

Madam Cactus, who has talked of divorce so long and fluently will get it, and we’ll see her no more.

Widow Catch-fly, who was a bride one year before last, will be a bride again before the snow comes, and Canterbury-bells will be a happy man.

A Daffodil will console a sorely wounded Hyacinth, and White Moss Rose will be a bridesmaid before she is a bride (just to show

the truth did not cut, you know,) but she will be a bride when Chrysanthemums bloom.

And Snowdrop—ah! who will warn my poor little Snowdrop of the cloud that will come and blow away ere the Holly and Mistletoe are hung on the wall. The shadow will be thick, but through the first break will be seen a dark-eyed stranger, the Cinnamon Rose, and she will be consoled with the purest emblem of all, “Such as I am receive me; would I were more for *your* sake.”

Madam Nettle will say some ugly things that will raise a little row, but Master Nasturtium (honor to the brave) will boldly defend the “Legion.”

Oh! there’ll be changes in fashion, in times, and in people.

Theater hats will humbler grow; bonds will set us on our feet, and rusty vault locks will turn again. It’s a jolly, good people who don’t care what their grand-children do thirty years from now. Let the sun shine! let the bonds fly! we’ll be happy while we may. We have been cold and hungry, but now,

“Oh! won’t we have a jolly time!
Oh! won’t we have a jolly time!
Jerusha put the kettle on,
We’ll all take tea.”

Some new people will come, and some we know will go, and there is ‘‘the grass of the field, that to-day is and to-morrow will be cut down’’—yes, whisper it softly, it is the common fate of all, and some soon will be cut down.

Yet let us sing a wordless song for the moments drifting by, and gather up the sunbeams while we may; there is yet life in the land, and the flowers are coming. Yes, they will all come, but the Orange flowers will drift the highest, far, far above the funeral wreaths, like drifts of pure white snow, for the truth has been told. **THE TRUTH HAS BEEN TOLD!**

[The End.]

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